



November 19, 2003

OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK250-4-11**SUBJECT: FNM - Travel**

Purpose: To provide employees with information and guidelines for temporary duty travel.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2004

In order to eliminate travel voucher errors and to facilitate payment, the following are general information and guidelines for temporary duty travel.

1. **It remains the employee's responsibility to ensure a travel authorization is in place prior to travel.**
2. Travelers are required to submit a travel voucher within 5 days of completion of trip or period of travel, or every 30 days if employee is in continuous travel status.
3. There can be only one purpose code and one travel authorization number per voucher.
4. NRCS travelers should select "Salary Address" option only in Section B - Travel Voucher Mailing Address Options section of the AD-616 Travel Voucher.
5. Taxes should be vouchered separately from lodging costs. Actual costs for lodging taxes are to be claimed as a miscellaneous expense in the "Supplies" line on the back of the voucher. If the employee elects to stay at a hotel that exceeds the maximum lodging costs authorized, the taxes are to be prorated. Employees should obtain itemized receipts from hotels to facilitate vouchering. For example, if maximum lodging cost is \$55 and hotel costs \$100, employee can only claim taxes up to the maximum lodging cost of \$55.
6. Employees accompanied by family members sharing the same hotel room are limited to reimbursement for a single room.
7. Meal and incidental expenses (M&IE) are broken down as follows

M&IE	\$31	\$35	\$39	\$43	\$47	\$51
Breakfast	6	7	8	9	9	10
Lunch	6	7	8	9	11	12
Dinner	16	18	20	22	24	26
Incidentals	3	3	3	3	3	3

Employees are reminded that when the Government furnishes meals at nominal or no cost or meals are included in registration fees or lodging cost, the appropriate amount should be deducted from M&IE. Complimentary meals offered by hotels and airlines do not have to be deducted.

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8. Per diem rates for Oklahoma are as follows:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Maximum Lodging (Room Rate Only-No Taxes)</u>	<u>M&IE</u>	<u>Per Diem Rate</u>
Oklahoma City (Oklahoma County)	\$67	\$43	\$110
All Other (CONUS)	\$55	\$31	\$ 86

- 9 **Employees are responsible for ascertaining applicable per diem rates for travel locations prior to traveling.** Per diem is lodging costs plus a fixed rate for meals and incidental expenses such as tips. GSA sets the per diem rate. The maximum lodging rate is the basic lodging charge before taxes. Zone office assistants, section secretaries, or financial management should be able to provide information on per diem rates or may be found at the following web site:

<http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/perdiem/travel.shtml>

- 10 **A special travel authorization is required to authorize the higher lodging rates exceeding the CONUS rate. The authority to authorize the higher rate is not delegated below the state budget officer. Approval must be obtained in advance and will be on a case-by-case basis.** Please submit written requests, justification, documentation that the traveler has tried at least three other hotels, and a statement of overwhelming need to stay at that particular hotel to your office assistant or state office secretary for forwarding to financial management. Just because a block of rooms has been reserved for a conference or meeting, the traveler is not obligated to stay at that hotel especially if the lodging is not within the allowable CONUS rate. The need for networking does not constitute an overwhelming need; however, a management conference that has been arranged where lodging must be procured at a prearranged place and ALL participants are REQUIRED to stay there does. The travel management center, zone office assistants, secretaries, or financial management can assist you in obtaining a list of hotels for your travel location.
- 11 Employees are also reminded that **when a federal employee rents a lodging room directly from the proprietor, he or she becomes liable for the amount of the room rental, including tax.** GSA has reported there are many counterfeit tax-exempt certificates being circulated (some by NRCS). There is no valid Federal tax exempt certificate for this purpose. Several states, cities, and local municipalities (as the taxing jurisdiction) do offer their own tax-exempt lodging to Federal employees while in travel status. Texas is the only state in the South Central Region that offers this type of tax exemption. Oklahoma City offers a tax exemption for hotel tax only. This form must be presented at check-in. It remains the hotel's option whether or not to honor this tax exemption. For tax exemption information for other locations, please contact your zone office assistant, section secretary, or financial management.
- 12 POV mileage rates remain at 36 cents per mile government advantage rate and 10.5 cents per mile personal preference.
- 13 Employees are required to use our travel management center for booking common carrier transportation, out of state hotel/motel accommodations and rental cars **except** in the following situations:
- Any travel for which advance reservations are impractical, e.g., when a traveler is on the road and does not know where lodging will be available (most in-state travel will fall under this exception).
 - For travel situations where only a rental car is needed, travelers may deal directly with the appropriate company.

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- Hotel accommodations for a conference, seminar, etc., where the sponsoring organization has arranged for special rate and ensured that the facility complies with the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act's (HMFSa) standards. (Refer also to #9 above).

Bentley-Hedges is our current travel management center. Their phone number is: **1-800-467-7402**.

- 14 A government issued travel credit card is required to book all airline tickets and should be used for other travel related expenses such as lodging.
- 15 GSA negotiates a contract with airlines for travel on frequently used flights between certain cities. These are called contract city-pairs. Government travelers are required to use a contract city-pair fare if available.
- 16 Promotional items, including frequent flyer miles earned on official travel may be retained for personal use if such items are obtained under the same conditions offered to the general public at no additional cost to the government. Each traveler is responsible for handling personal frequent flyer mileage accounts. **Travelers may not select airlines or other travel services based upon frequent flyer programs or other promotional items.** Travelers are still expected to select the method of travel most advantageous to the government.
- 17 Laundry, cleaning and pressing of clothing may be charged as a reimbursable miscellaneous expense. A minimum of four consecutive nights lodging is required to qualify for reimbursement.
- 18 Reimbursement for telephone calls of a personal nature are authorized when an employee travels for more than one night, i.e., two or more nights on government business, to the employee's residence to speak to members of the immediate family. The total amount that may be approved for each travel period cannot exceed an amount equal to \$5.00 multiplied by the number of lodging nights. Reimbursement should be claimed ONLY if calls are made as outlined in DR2300-3. The \$5 phone call is not an automatic entitlement for employees on travel status. Travelers are to be prudent with government funds. Please refer to Oklahoma Bulletin OK250-4-9 for more detailed information on telephone calls while in travel status.
- 19 Itemized receipts are required for lodging and for any expenses costing over \$75. Credit card receipts are not sufficient for vouchering.
- 20 All travel vouchers must be typed or prepared LEGIBLY in ink (pencil is not acceptable). Travelers and approving officials must make sure to include the date that they signed the travel voucher. Signatures must be original and in ink.
- 21 Copies of travel vouchers (front & back) for NEDC training should now be sent to Human Resources, State Office, for input into OBITS.

Attached are a meeting attendance form (amended), a travel information sheet, and instruction sheets for completing travel vouchers for domestic travel.

For more detailed information, please contact your zone office assistant, section secretary, or financial management.

/s/ - (Randy Freeland – Acting)

M. DARREL DOMINICK
State Conservationist

Attachments